



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME)



EU programme LIFE for the environment and climate

Call for proposals LIFE-NGO-EASME-2019

FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS TO SUPPORT NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS PRIMARILY ACTIVE IN THE
AREAS OF ENVIRONMENT AND/OR CLIMATE ACTION

AND SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENTS

Applicants are invited to read the present document in conjunction with the Guide for Applicants and the model Framework Partnership Agreement and Specific Grant Agreement published with this call, as well as the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/biblio/documents/regulations/regulations_en.cfm

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1. INTRODUCTION – BACKGROUND

This call for proposals for the establishment of two year Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA) and for specific grant agreements for 2020 is published under Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013 of 11 December 2013 on the establishment of a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)*. The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (henceforth "EASME")¹, acting under powers delegated by the European Commission, invites non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are primarily active in the areas of environment and/or climate action and which have an environmental/climate objective, to submit a proposal.² For the purpose of the present call, the generic acronym "NGO" is used in this document to refer to the target group of this call, namely NGOs as defined in Section 5.2.

The LIFE programme³ is the EU's funding instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed more than 4000 projects, contributing approximately €3.4 billion euros to the protection of the environment and climate objectives of the EU.

The LIFE operating grants for NGOs aim to strengthen the participation of civil society in the EU policy dialogue, as well as to support implementation and enforcement of Union environmental and climate objectives by the beneficiaries. The operating grants that co-finance the functioning costs of EU-level environmental and climate NGOs are awarded through a competitive and transparent procedure following the present call.

NEW FEATURES

1. Unlike previous LIFE operating grants calls, this call for proposals foresees both applications with two separate submission deadlines:

I. for framework partnership agreements (**FPAs**, financial years 2020 and 2021) and

II. for specific grant agreements (**SGAs**, financial year 2020).

NB: Only applicants that will be selected for FPAs will be invited at a later stage to submit the SGA proposal for the first year (2020). The invitation for

*The call for operating grants for 2021 will be launched subject to the prior adoption and entry into force of the new LIFE regulation, currently in co-decision process and the LIFE multiannual work programme.

¹EASME was set up by the Commission implementing decision of 17 December 2013 establishing the "Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized enterprises" and repealing decisions 2004/20/EC and 2007/372/EC (OJ L 341 of 18.12.2013). EASME replaces and supersedes former Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI).

² The legal basis of this call is LIFE Regulation (2014-2020) No 1293/2013 as further detailed by the Multi Annual Work Programme 2018-2020 and by the Commission Implementing Decision of 12 February 2018 on the adoption of the LIFE multiannual work programme for 2018-2020 (2018/210/EU).

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/background/>

the second year SGA (2021) will be launched in 2020, assuming the timely adoption of the post-2020 LIFE Regulation containing provisions to continue the financing of operating grants.

2. The award criteria (Section 5.5) have been restructured and simplified.

2. OBJECTIVES – THEMES – PRIORITIES

The **objective** of this Call is to promote better environmental and climate governance by broadening stakeholder involvement, including NGOs, in policy consultation and implementation. This is foreseen as a specific objective of the sub-programme for Environment for the priority area Environmental Governance and Information and for the priority area Climate Governance and Information of the Climate Action sub-programme, in Articles 12(d) and 16(d) of the LIFE Regulation, respectively.⁴ All references to environment encompass climate policy.

This call for proposals aims at identifying framework partners to which the EASME may, at a later stage, award specific operating grants (see Sections 5 and 6). Those specific operating grants shall foresee co-financing of the operating costs of NGOs related to the eligible activities provided for in the framework partners' 2020 and 2021 Work Programmes (subject to the conclusion of appropriate provisions in the post-2020 LIFE Regulation). This call covers both the FPAs and the first SGA so that applicants are already aware of the full requirements.

The strategic plan shall have one or more of the following priorities as spelt out in the 7th European Environment Action Plan:

- to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital;
- to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy;
- to safeguard the Union's citizens from environmental and climate-related pressures and risks to health and wellbeing;
- to maximise the benefits of the Union's environment legislation by improving implementation;
- to increase knowledge about the environment and widen the evidence base for policy;
- to secure investment for environment and climate policy and account for the environmental costs of any societal activities;
- to better integrate environmental concerns into other policy areas and ensure coherence when creating new policy;
- to make the Union's cities more sustainable;
- to help the Union address international environmental and climate challenges more effectively.

These thematic objectives are developed in detail in the Environment Action Programme (EAP) for the EU entitled "Living well, within the limits of our planet", the circular

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1293&from=EN>

economy action plan⁵, the Action plan on nature, people and the economy, the European Commission Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe⁶, the EU strategy for a climate neutral Europe by 2050 and the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change.⁷

The LIFE contribution aims at facilitating the implementation of a work programme of the applicant NGO, which could not otherwise be implemented without the support of the European Union. The financial contribution is based on the co-financing principle. It is only a supplementary financial contribution, additional to local, regional, national and/or private contributions obtained for implementing the work programme of the NGO.

Activities outlined in the biannual strategic plan and which take place outside of the EU borders are only eligible for funding if they provide direct added value in one or more of the EU Member States for the implementation, updating or development of EU environmental and/or climate legislation.⁸

Each applicant shall identify its main area(s) of work among the following thematic priorities:

- Water
- Waste
- Resource efficiency
- Environment and health
- Air
- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Greenhouse gas emission reduction
- Climate adaptation
- Energy
- Transport
- Biodiversity
- Finance
- Trade

3. TIMETABLE

3.1. Submission and evaluation

The timetable of this call foresees the following steps:

1. Applicants submit their FPA application within the deadline as indicated in the table below (date of sending)
2. EASME evaluates the applications, establishes a ranked list and notifies all applicants on the outcome of the FPA evaluation

⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy', <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0614>

⁶ Communication COM/2011/0571 final of 20 September 2011 from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 'Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe', <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2011:0571:FIN>

⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013D1386&from=EN>

⁸ LIFE Regulation, Art. 6

3. EASME invites only those applicants that are on top of the ranked list, and for which the available budget is sufficient, to submit their SGA application
4. The invited applicants will submit their SGA application with a deadline of about one month from the invitation
5. EASME will evaluate the SGA proposals and notify the applicants on the outcome of the SGA evaluation. A revision phase⁹ might follow for the passing applications and before signing the annual specific grant agreement

	Steps	Date and time or indicative period
a)	Publication of the present call for proposals	March 2019
b)	Deadline for submitting FPA proposals (two year strategy 2020-2021)	3 June 2019 before 24:00h Before 16:00 pm (Brussels time) for hand delivered applications to the Central Mail Service – see Section 11.
c)	Evaluation period for FPA proposal	June-September 2019*
d)	Notification of results on FPA proposals to all applicants Restricted invitation to selected applicants to submit their SGA proposal (2020 work programme and budget)	October 2019*
e)	Signature of the FPAs (framework partnership agreements)	October 2019*
f)	Deadline for submitting SGA proposals	Around 1 month from the invitation to submit
g)	Evaluation of the SGA proposals	November - December 2019*
h)	Notification of results for SGA proposals	December 2019*
i)	Revisions of the SGA proposals	December 2019 - February 2020*
j)	Signature of the Specific operating Grant Agreements for financial year 2020	February - April 2020*

* Indicative timing

3.2. Starting date and duration of the framework partnerships and the operating grants

The actual entry into force of the grant will be the first day following the date when the last of the two parties signs the grant agreement.

⁹ This revision cannot call into question the grounds for awarding a proposal and cannot alter substantial elements of the proposal.

4. BUDGET AVAILABLE

The indicative total budget earmarked for the co-financing of NGO operating grants is estimated at EUR 24,000,000 (twenty-four million euros) for a two year period, i.e. EUR 12,000,000 (twelve million euros) yearly, subject to budget availability for 2021. The funds available for the financial year 2021 will be defined in the corresponding LIFE Multi Annual Work Programme. The indicative amount available for the annual operating grant for 2020 can be found under section 6.1.

The maximum EU contribution will be EUR 700,000 (seven hundred thousand euros) per grant per year (see section 8.1).

The EASME reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available.

5. TWO-YEAR FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (FPA)

The conclusion of framework partnership agreements will help to forge strong and enriching relations with a number of key NGOs whilst allowing a more stable and structured environment of mutual benefit for the EASME and selected organisations.

The framework partnership agreement will set out the conditions governing grants to partners on the basis of a biennial strategic plan. The strategic plan will present the vision, the mission and the value of the organisation as well as the strategic objectives the organisation is committed to implement with European Union's support.

Framework partnership agreements define the respective roles and responsibilities of the EASME and of the beneficiaries in implementing the partnership. They present the common objectives agreed by the NGOs and the EASME; the type of activities envisaged; the procedure for awarding a specific agreement for an annual operating grant; the general rights and the obligations of each party under the specific agreements.

The first-level agreement does not constitute an obligation for the EASME to award a specific agreement for an annual operating grant.

5.1. Admissibility Requirements

In order to be admissible, applications must be:

- sent to EASME no later than the deadline for submitting applications referred to in section 3;
- submitted in writing (see section 11) using the template application form available at <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/calls-proposals>;
- drafted in one of the EU official languages, but preferably in English¹⁰; and
- duly signed where indicated.

¹⁰ Note that the project management and reporting with the EASME will have to be in English, and submission of applications in the English language would facilitate the work of the EASME.

Applicants must use the standard forms, and the current content of the forms cannot be modified. This does not refer to size and layout of the forms. Please maintain a font size of at least 11 in the descriptive parts of the application. Applications must be electronically written, i.e. cannot be completed hand-written. This does not refer to signatures or other type of information that cannot be typed/printed. Applications must contain all requested forms and annexes (if applicable).

Two copies of the proposal must be submitted: one original printed version and one copy, and an electronic version contained on a CDrom or USB stick must also be submitted following the instructions in section 11.

Failure to comply with the above requirements will lead to the rejection of the application except in case of obvious clerical errors or minor omissions. In such cases, the EASME will send an e-mail to the applicant with a short deadline, indicating the information that is missing or the clarification that is needed. It is the responsibility of the applicant to reply swiftly, in any case within seven calendar days.

The e-mail address of the contact person indicated in form A2 will be used for this and all subsequent contacts. Therefore applicants should ensure that it is an e-mail account which is valid, active and checked on a regular basis.

5.2. Eligibility Criteria¹¹

Proposals must be submitted by a **single legal entity** that fulfils the below requirements.

To be eligible, any applicant must:

1. Be a non-profit making legal person;
2. Be independent, in particular from government, other public authorities, and from political or commercial interests;
3. Be primarily active in the areas of environment and/or climate action and have an environmental/climate objective which is aimed at:
 - a. the public good,
 - b. sustainable development, and
 - c. the development, implementation and enforcement of European Union environmental and/or climate policy and legislation;

In case of doubt, EASME will refer to the statutes (or equivalent) of the NGO to determine its objective.

4. Be established (legally registered) in one of the European Union Member States.¹²
5. Be operating at Union level with a structure and activities covering at least three European Union Member States.

¹¹ Art. 197 of the Regulation (EU, EURATOM) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (FR)

¹² To date, no bilateral or multilateral agreements are yet in place or under discussion, which would allow applications by organisations from third countries as referred to in article 5, LIFE Regulation, ("The LIFE Programme shall be open to the participation of the following countries: (a) European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA); (b) candidate countries, potential candidates and acceding countries to the Union; (c) countries to which the European Neighbourhood Policy applies; (d) countries which have become members of the European Environmental Agency in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 933/1999 (1). Such participation shall be pursued in accordance with the conditions laid down in the respective bilateral or multilateral agreements establishing the general principles for those third countries' participation in Union programmes.")

Applicants will have to demonstrate a structure and activities covering at least three European Union Member States. To this end, partnerships, networks and memberships are taken into account if they are formally established as legal entities. Partnerships, networks and memberships must be represented by a management board or any other administrative forum that is mandated by its members to represent them at EU level and is responsible for the activities of the network. So-called "loose co-operations" or temporary partnerships are not eligible under this call.

Memberships comprise exclusively legal entities, i.e. not natural persons. All members must be listed in the application. Nevertheless, members are not eligible for funding. Only the applicant NGO, if selected, will become the single beneficiary of the grant and can claim costs. Entities affiliated¹³ to the applicant are not eligible to receive funding under this Call for proposals. See also Section 8.9 (c).

Statutes and/or activity reports of memberships, partnerships or networks will serve as evidence for the structure and activities covering at least three countries.

Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the Framework Partnership Agreement. If the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the period of the Framework Partnership Agreement without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, British beneficiaries will cease to receive EU funding under any specific grant agreement. EASME may terminate on the basis of Article II.17.2.2 of General Conditions to the Framework Partnership Agreement.

Supporting documents

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, the following supporting documents are requested:

- **Legal Entity Form** accompanied by the indicated **supporting documents**:

- Download the Legal entity form here:
http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/leg_Ent_privComp_en.pdf
- Add a copy of the following supporting documents:
 - Registration document: Register(s) of Companies, Official Gazette, Etc.
 - VAT registration document, if VAT is applicable

- **Statutes of the NGO (or equivalent)**

- **Annual Activity Report of the previous year**

- **Accounts of the previous year (see financial section below)**

- **CVs of the main staff involved in the work programme (see technical selection)**

If the applicant is a newly created entity that has less than one year of existence, it is acceptable that the activity report covers less than 12 months.

¹³ In accordance with Article 187 of the financial Regulation, entities that satisfy the eligibility criteria and that do not fall within one of the situations referred to in Articles 136(1) and 141(1) FR and that have a link with the applicant, in particular a legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation, will be considered as entities affiliated to the applicant.

Only proposals which comply with all eligibility criteria will be further evaluated.

5.2.1. *Activities funded*

The following types of activities are funded under this call for proposals:

- advocacy activities, both at EU and national/local levels;
- participation in EU public consultations;
- cooperation and coalition building with other organisations;
- position papers, conferences, seminars;
- training activities;
- awareness raising and dissemination actions;
- actions aiming at the creation and improvement of networks, exchanges of good practices;
- studies, analyses, mapping activities.

5.2.2. *Implementation period*

Activities may not start before 01/01/2020. The duration of the framework partnership agreement is 24 months and that of each specific grant agreement is 12 months.

Applications for grants scheduled to run longer will not be accepted.

5.3. **Exclusion Criteria**

5.3.1. *Exclusion*

The authorising officer shall exclude an applicant from participating in call for proposals procedures where:

- (a) the applicant is bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are suspended, or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU or national laws or regulations;
- (b) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the applicable law;
- (c) it has been established by a final judgment or a final administrative decision that the applicant is guilty of grave professional misconduct by having violated applicable laws or regulations or ethical standards of the profession to which the applicant belongs, or by having engaged in any wrongful intent or gross negligence, including, in particular, any of the following:
 - (i) fraudulently or negligently misrepresenting information required for the verification of the absence of grounds for exclusion or the fulfilment of eligibility or selection criteria or in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision;

- (ii) entering into agreement with other applicants with the aim of distorting competition;
 - (iii) violating intellectual property rights;
 - (iv) attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Agency during the award procedure;
 - (v) attempting to obtain confidential information that may confer upon it undue advantages in the award procedure;
- (d) it has been established by a final judgment that the applicant is guilty of any of the following:
- (i) fraud, within the meaning of Article 3 of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Article 1 of the Convention on the protection of the European Communities' financial interests, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - (ii) corruption, as defined in Article 4(2) of Directive (EU) 2017/1371 or Article 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union, drawn up by the Council Act of 26 May 1997, or conduct referred to in Article 2(1) of Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, or corruption as defined in the applicable law;
 - (iii) conduct related to a criminal organisation, as referred to in Article 2 of Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - (iv) money laundering or terrorist financing within the meaning of Article 1(3), (4) and (5) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
 - (v) terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, as defined in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, respectively, or inciting, aiding, abetting or attempting to commit such offences, as referred to in Article 4 of that Decision;
 - (vi) child labour or other offences concerning trafficking in human beings as referred to in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council;
- (e) the applicant has shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations in the performance of a contract, a grant agreement or a grant decision financed by the Union's budget, which has led to its early termination or to the application of liquidated damages or other contractual penalties, or which has been discovered following checks, audits or investigations by an authorising officer, OLAF or the Court of Auditors;
- (f) it has been established by a final judgment or final administrative decision that the applicant has committed an irregularity within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95;
- (g) It has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that the applicant has created an entity in a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or any other legal obligations of mandatory application in the jurisdiction of its registered office, central administration or principal place of business;
- (h) it has been established by a final judgement or final administrative decision that an entity has been created with the intent referred to in point (g);

- (i) for the situations referred to in points (c) to (h) above, the applicant is subject to:
- i. facts established in the context of audits or investigations carried out by European Public Prosecutor's Office after its establishment, the Court of Auditors, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the internal auditor, or any other check, audit or control performed under the responsibility of an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body;
 - ii. non-final judgments or non-final administrative decisions which may include disciplinary measures taken by the competent supervisory body responsible for the verification of the application of standards of professional ethics;
 - iii. facts referred to in decisions of persons or entities being entrusted with EU budget implementation tasks;
 - iv. information transmitted by Member States implementing Union funds;
 - v. decisions of the Commission relating to the infringement of Union competition law or of a national competent authority relating to the infringement of Union or national competition law; or
 - vi. decisions of exclusion by an authorising officer of an EU institution, of a European office or of an EU agency or body.

5.3.2. *Remedial measures*¹⁴

If an applicant declares one of the situations of exclusion listed in Form A1, it must indicate the measures it has taken to remedy the exclusion situation, thus demonstrating its reliability. This may include e.g. technical, organisational and personnel measures to correct the conduct and prevent further occurrence, compensation of damage or payment of fines or of any taxes or social security contributions. The relevant documentary evidence which illustrates the remedial measures taken must be provided in annex to the declaration. This does not apply for situations referred in point (a) of section 5.4.1.

5.3.3. *Rejection from the call for proposals*

The authorising officer shall not award a grant to an applicant who:

- a. is in an exclusion situation established in accordance with the list provided in Form A1; or
- b. has misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or has failed to supply that information; or
- c. was previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equal treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

¹⁴ Article 136(7) FR

Administrative sanctions (exclusion)¹⁵ may be imposed on applicants, if any of the declarations or information provided as a condition for participating in this procedure prove to be false.

5.3.4. *Supporting documents*

Applicants must sign the Declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the detailed situations referred to in articles 136(1) and 141 of the Financial Regulation, using the relevant form (Form A1) available at

<https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/calls-proposals>.

5.4. **Selection criteria**¹⁶

The selection criteria will enable EASME to assess the applicant organisation's financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed work programme. Only organisations with the necessary financial and operational capacity may be considered for a FPA.

5.4.1. *Financial capacity*¹⁷

Applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the duration of the grant and to participate in its funding.

The applicants' financial capacity will be assessed on the basis of the supporting documents to be submitted with the application. The thresholds mentioned below refer to the amounts of the EU requested funding per year.

- a) Low value grants \leq EUR 60 000:
 - a declaration on their honour covering the two years period (form A1, see Section 5.3.1).
 - b) Operating grants $>$ EUR 60 000:
 - 1. a declaration on their honour covering the two years period (form A1), and
 - 2. the profit and loss account as well as the balance sheet for the last 2 financial years for which the accounts were closed;
 - 3. for newly established entities: the business plan might replace the above documents;
 - 4. the table provided for in the application form, filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures, in order to calculate the ratios as detailed in the form.
1. the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the 2 last financial years available for which the accounts were closed or if applicable:
- For newly created entities, the NGOs business plan covering the 2 year period or equivalent might replace the above documents;

¹⁵ Article 138 FR

¹⁶ Article 198 FR

¹⁷ Articles 196 and 198 FR

- In case of exceptional circumstances, notably regarding a new network created by pre-existing organisations, EASME may grant derogation of the requirement of supporting documents referring to the two previous years and request the applicants to demonstrate their financial capacity in any other way, by submitting for example:
 - o The NGO's provisional budget
 - o Supporting documents such as an appropriate statement from a bank, a tax declaration, a certificate from national authorities stating that social charges were paid on time, etc.
 - o If the NGO cannot submit any of those, or the outcome of the analysis is not satisfactory, EASME could request the organisation to submit a financial guarantee provided by a bank or an approved financial institution. Alternatively, one or several of the founding member organisations could act as a guarantor, after acceptance by the Agency and verification of its financial viability (a financial guarantee would have to be submitted by this third party).

2. the table provided in the application form (Financial Capacity form – F), filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures (or figures from the business plan).

Financial capacity form – F must be completed by all applicants that request a contribution higher than 60.000 EUR.

Form F collects financial data based on the applicant's balance sheet and profit-and-loss account for the last two financial years in a standardised form (or when applicable from the business plan). A table of equivalence between the different classifications of accounts compared and the Fourth Directive on accounting harmonisation is set out in section F of the application guide. This form must be completed carefully. Given its complexity, it should be completed by a professional accountant or an auditor. The data reported will be used to evaluate the financial capacity of the applicant.

It is therefore very important that the data reported are accurate. The EASME may wish to cross-check the data with those reported in the official certified accounts or the business plan (to be submitted as obligatory documents – see point above). The amounts must be entered in Euro. For financial statements established in other currencies, please refer to the EU InforEuro exchange rates (for the closing date of the statement) available on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?Language=en>.

c) Operating grants > EUR 100 000¹⁸:

- (i) the information and supporting documents mentioned in point b) above, and
- (ii) an **audit report** produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last two financial years available, where such an audit report is available or whenever a statutory report is required by law.

¹⁸ Article 196(d) FR

If the audit report is not available AND a statutory report is not required by law, a self-declaration signed by the applicant's authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for the last two financial years available must be provided.

Assessment of the financial capacity shall guarantee a selection of beneficiaries with sound and sufficient financial resources.

It shall show that the applicant has sources to cover their share of costs estimated in the budget and be able to maintain their activities over the period of the implementation of the work programme.

In particular, the co-funding structure and/or the applicant's assets shall guarantee a secure and stable flow of money to manage their activity as described in the application.

The financial viability check will also be used to assess whether a financial guarantee would be required to cover the EU pre-financing payment to the project or to decide to pay pre-financing in two instalments.

The following indicators (5 financial and 1 based on activity) will be assessed resulting in 2 outcomes, 1 financial assessment and 1 assessment on the activity ratio:

- a) Current Ratio = Current assets/ Short term debt (bank and non-bank). Indicates if non-profit companies could face his short terms obligations.
- b) Profitability = GOP (gross operating surplus). In order to survive non-profit companies has to operate as close as possible to the break-even point.
- c) Profitability = Profit or loss of the financial year. In order to survive non-profit companies has to operate as close as possible to the break-even point.
- d) Financial independence = Equity / total liabilities. Indicates if the organisation is dependent of its creditors.
- e) Adequacy of equity = Equity/turnover (revenue). Measures the risk of the non-profit company when faced to reduction in revenues.
- f) Activity ratio: annual co-financing/turnover and grant requested/turnover. Determines the importance of the grant amount for the organisation and the organisation's ability to manage the complementary volume of activity.

There are three possible outcomes (Fail, pass with caution, pass):

- The applicant does not possess the financial capacity to cover its share of costs/financing (Fail):
 - if all three ratings on financial and activity ratios are 'weak' or
 - if the documents mentioned above have not been submitted and therefore the assessment could not be carried out.
- The applicant has 2 'weak' ratings on financial and activity ratios, but is considered to have the financial capacity to cover its share of costs/financing on condition that a financial guarantee is submitted to cover the pre-financing or that pre-financing is paid in two instalments (pass with caution) .

- The applicant has maximum 1 ‘weak’ rating on financial and activity ratios and is considered to have the financial capacity to cover its share of costs/financing (Pass).

On the basis of the documents submitted and of the outcomes explained above, if the Agency considers that financial capacity is weak, it may:

- request further information;
- decide not to give pre-financing;
- decide to give pre-financing paid in instalments;
- decide to give pre-financing covered by a bank guarantee (see below);

If the Agency considers that the financial capacity is insufficient, it will reject the application.

Certification of the annual statement of accounts for the two preceding years should be based on an audit understood as an *additional* independent control, carried out in accordance with certain fixed and recognised principles¹⁹ by an officially registered auditor.

The following requirements should be met:

- The auditor should carry out a full audit and not a limited review. This should include checks on the underlying documents.
- The person or company which normally does the book-keeping cannot be the same as the one carrying out the audit and certification of the annual accounts.
- Certification of the annual accounts should be accompanied by the auditor’s report, including their opinion on whether the information presented in the financial statement is correct and free of material misstatements, stamped, dated and signed.
- Persons responsible for carrying out independent audits of accounting documents may, depending on the law of each Member State, be natural or legal persons or other types of company, firm or partnership. They should be listed in the registers held by Member States of auditors approved by them to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents.

Exceptionally for new entities/networks, the following documents may replace the above:

1.
 - The NGO's business plan (or equivalent);
 - In case of exceptional circumstances, notably regarding a new network created by pre-existing organisations, EASME may grant derogation of the requirement of supporting documents referring to the two previous years and request the applicants to demonstrate their financial capacity in any other way, by submitting for example:

¹⁹ International Auditing Standards and Codes of Ethics

- The NGO's provisional budget;
- Supporting documents such as an appropriate statement from a bank, a tax declaration, a certificate from national authorities stating that social charges were paid on time, etc.
- If the NGO cannot submit any of those, or the outcome of the analysis is not satisfactory, EASME could request the organisation to submit a financial guarantee provided by a bank or an approved financial institution. Alternatively, one or several of the founding member organisations could act as a guarantor, after acceptance by the Agency and verification of its financial viability (a financial guarantee would have to be submitted by this third party).

2. the table provided in the application form (Financial Capacity form – F), filled in with the relevant statutory accounting figures (or figures from the business plan).

5.4.2. *Operational capacity*²⁰

Applicants must have a sound administrative and financial management structure, the operational resources (technical, management,) and the professional skills and qualifications needed to successfully complete the proposed work programme, as well as the ability to implement it. In this respect, applicants have to submit:

- a declaration on honour – Form A1 (including operational capacity to carry out the activity), signed by the legal representative, and the following supporting documents:
- curriculum vitae of the proposed person in charge of coordination and of the persons who will perform the main tasks, showing all their relevant professional experience for managing and implementing the activities;
- at least one of the organisation's most recent activity reports.

If one of the selection criteria listed above (financial or operational) is not fulfilled, organisations are not selected and are eliminated from the further evaluation process.

5.5. **Award criteria**²¹

The quality of proposals for the 2-year framework partnership agreement, which fulfil the admissibility, exclusion, eligibility and selection criteria, will be assessed according to the extent to which the biennial strategy meets the following award criteria:

1. Policy Relevance (Max 20 points): Relevance of the NGO's strategic plan for the Union's environmental and climate action policies.

The evaluation will assess the proposal's:

- Relevance for the thematic objectives of the 7th Environment Action Programme:

²⁰ Article 196 and 198 FR

²¹ Article 199 FR

- To protect, conserve, and enhance the Union's natural capital;
- To turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green, and competitive low-carbon economy;
- To safeguard the Union's citizens from environmental and climate-related pressures and risks to health and wellbeing.
- Relevance for the horizontal priority objectives of the 7th Environment Action Programme:
 - The proposal addresses the sustainable, low-carbon and climate resilient development of urban areas;
 - The proposal helps to increase the EU's contribution to international environmental and/or climate-related objectives.
- Relevance for the economy-wide action on climate and energy emission reductions, including removing fossil fuel subsidies and implementing the polluter pays principle, enhancing low-carbon innovation and deployment and realising the roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050 in practice;
- Relevance for the Union's climate change adaptation strategy;
- EU added value, i.e. whether the work programme goes beyond the national perspective and applies to the larger European context;
- Potential to have a real impact measured against specific indicators.

Please do not simply list related EU policy initiatives and legislation but present clearly how your strategy links and contributes to their implementation, shaping and/or development, and how your work will have an impact on the EU level.

There is no direct link between the number of thematic areas covered and the evaluation result. An applicant with high quality activities in a few areas will get a higher score than an applicant with medium quality activities in many areas.

International outreach could include for example formal involvement in or contributions to working groups or committees of the United Nations or of the OECD or preparations to the COPs.

Activities aimed at supporting EU's leadership in matters such as sustainable use of resources, biodiversity protection, environmentally sustainable trade, climate change mitigation/adaptation, etc. all contribute to the EU added value of the proposal. These can have an impact at EU and/or international levels, e.g. within the framework of the Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEAs), the Union's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) etc.

Furthermore, concerning the EU added value, the application should include justification for and benefits of implementing (and co-financing) the planned activities at European level as opposed to national/regional/local level.

Please make an effort in trying to quantify your targeted impacts and support them with specific indicators, although impacts may be difficult to determine or predict.

2. EU Policy Shaping (Max 20 points): Contribution of the NGO to shape, develop or update the Union's environmental and/or climate action policies.

The evaluation will assess to which extent the proposal demonstrates the following:

- The proposal shows an in-depth understanding of the EU policy process;
- The proposal will improve the knowledge and evidence base for Union environment and/or climate action policy;
- The proposal will improve environmental and/or climate action integration and coherence with other policies;
- The NGO will act as a channel between civil society and the EU level, providing coordinated policy input;
- The NGO has the structure in place and will use appropriate means to voice the concerns of EU citizens and to ensure their democratic representation vis a vis the relevant institutions.

Pure research activities are not targeted by this call for proposals.

Other policies to be addressed could be for example agriculture, energy, transport, health, cohesion policy, etc. but also external policies, such as trade or development policies.

Civil society includes citizens in general, members (grass root level) and if relevant also stakeholders and other NGOs.

The NGO's democratic legitimacy and accountability must be explained to justify its role of representation and advocacy.

3. EU policy implementation (Max 20 points): Contribution of the NGO to implement and enforce the Union's environmental and/or climate action policies.

The evaluation will assess how the applicant intends to help the implementation and enforcement of Union policy based on the following:

- The proposal aims to maximise the benefits of the Union's environment and/or climate action legislation by improving implementation and enforcement on local, Member State and/or European level;
- The proposal demonstrates that the applicant will act as a channel between the EU level and civil society, promoting and ensuring acceptance of policy implementation;
- The NGO will use appropriate means to create leverage, including the use of online and web based tools, the social media, awareness raising actions, media campaigns, as well as useful coordination and strategic cooperation with stakeholders, including other NGOs;
- The NGO's network will contribute to the identification of obstacles to policy implementation at national/regional level, for policy feedback;
- The proposal will help to secure investment for environment and/or climate action policy and address environmental externalities.

Domains covered by the area of investment and costs could be environmental externalities, polluter-pays principle, taxation, environmental accounts, beyond GDP, etc.

4. Sensor function (Max 5 points): Relevance in addressing new and emerging environmental and climate-related issues.

The evaluation will assess the extent to which:

- The proposal helps to detect new or emerging issues in the area of environment and/or climate change and is able to analyse the causes of such issues and their possible effects;
- The proposal demonstrates the capacity of the NGO to identify new threats or opportunities (or new ways and strategies to address existing threats) based on factual research and/or assessment, to propose appropriate solutions and to provide feedback on how to address these issues for improved policy making.

Emerging issues are issues currently developing or developing over the next years, which might substantially alter the current way environmental and/or climate related challenges are addressed at EU level. New issues include those that are only very recently in the focus of policy makers.

Issues can include risks, policy priorities or other requirements of relevance to environmental and/or climate related policies.

5. Organisational development (Max 15 points): Potential to develop in order to become a more efficient stakeholder in the Union's policy process.

The evaluation will assess the extent to which:

- The needs relating to organisational development (including appropriate staffing) have been properly analysed and described;
- The proposed strategy is appropriate to meet the needs and identified weaknesses and areas for improvement; it will contribute to strengthening the organisation (improvement compared to present situation);
- The NGO represents a wide range of stakeholders and endeavours to develop its grassroots or members base;
- The NGO has a convincing fundraising strategy based on the current situation and aims to ensure the diversification and sustainability of the organisation;
- The dependence of the NGO on the LIFE operating grant is assessed and strategies addressing this dependence are convincing.

Areas addressed under this criterion can be for example: organisational structure and staffing, strategic approach, financial management, evaluation and reporting, internal communication, technical competence, network enlargement/new members, visibility, network capacity building, partnerships/relations with other stakeholders.

Developing the grass roots base could be done for instance by increasing the membership base or by engaging and networking with other Civil Society Organisations.

When addressing fundraising, NGOs should consider the options of different sources of income or devise a strategic plan detailing how they plan to diversify their funding sources.

Applications will be ranked according to the total score awarded up to a maximum of 80 points. The proposals with the highest total scores will be recommended for award, on condition that the total score must achieve an overall total score equal to or higher than **45 points** for the proposal.

Applications with a score lower than the overall threshold will be rejected. Applications with a score equal to or higher than 45 points will be ranked and, subject to budget availability, invited to submit a proposal for a SGA.²²

Priority order for proposals with the same score

If necessary, a priority order for proposals which have been awarded with the same score will be established by the evaluation committee.

The priority order will be established on the basis of the following principles:

1. Priority will be given to applications that increase the coverage of the themes addressed by the NGOs recommended for signing a grant agreement;
2. Thereafter, applications according to their estimated value for money.

This ranking of proposals by score and priority order after the FPA evaluation will also constitute the order in which NGOs will be ranked once their SGA proposals have been evaluated, i.e. no new ranking will be established after the SGA evaluation.

6. SPECIFIC GRANT AGREEMENT FOR 2020 (SGA)

In order to implement their work programmes, NGOs, which have been selected to sign Framework Partnership Agreements, will be invited to submit their specific work programme for 2020. The eligibility criteria and exclusion criteria described in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 de facto apply to the operating grants. The assessment of the selection criteria (Section 5.4) is not necessary for operating grants published in the context of the evaluation of applications for Specific Grant Agreements.

6.1. Available budget and co-financing rate

The total budget earmarked for the EU co-financing of operating grants under this call for financial year 2020 is estimated at EUR 12,000,000 (twelve million euros).

The grant will be defined by applying a maximum co-financing rate of 60% to the eligible costs **actually incurred** and declared by the beneficiary. See section 8.1 for the financing conditions.

As a reference, the average grant awarded in 2018 for the one year grants was around EUR 330,000.

The EASME reserves the right not to distribute all the available funds.

6.2. Admissibility requirements for the Specific Grant Agreement application

To be complete, the proposal must include the following:

²² NB: the fact of having 45 points or more does not mean that the NGO will be funded.

- One original full application, printed and signed, consisting of the three parts of the application form, completed with all the information requested:
 - The work programme for the financial year 2020 (Form T, 10-20 pages)
 - A detailed budget breakdown for the financial year 2020 (Form F)
 - Applicant's profile (Form A)
 - Financial identification form, with supporting document when applicable (template available on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/eu-budget/how-it-works/annual-lifecycle/implementation/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/forms-contracts_en)
- One full application (A, T & F forms) in electronic format (CD-ROM or USB stick with the full application).

The assessment of eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria detailed in Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 will be performed during the FPA evaluation. Therefore, the SGA evaluation will be focused exclusively on the award criteria (see below) except when changes occur.

6.3. Award criteria for the Specific Grant Agreement²³

The submitted proposals will be examined by an evaluation committee on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Compliance of the work programme with the objectives and nature of activities specified in the framework partnership agreement;
2. Technical coherence and quality of the work programme;
3. Coherence between work programme and proposed budget, including efficient use of resources.

For each criterion a maximum of **20 points** will be awarded, adding up to a total maximum of 60 points. The minimum pass threshold that needs to be achieved is a total of at least **35 points**.

EASME will take the final decision on recommended or rejected and reserve list applications. This award decision shall include, for selected organisations, the maximum financial amount of the grant and the rate of co-financing granted. The selection of an application by the EASME does not constitute a commitment to award a financial contribution equal to the amount requested by the beneficiary.

The evaluation phase for the SGA proposals will potentially be followed by an adjustment phase focussing on the eligibility of costs and on technical issues identified during the evaluation. The forecast budget of all applications will be reviewed to identify any cost elements which are judged excessive or ineligible. EASME may invite applicants to provide clarifications and/or a revised budget to ensure compliance with the rules on eligible costs or where the granted amount would be reduced during revisions as compared to the amount requested in the application.

EASME may request further clarifications on the application already submitted. The clarifications may have to be provided within a very short notice.

²³ Art. 196, 199 FR

The EASME reserves the right to reduce the grant requested if the application includes elements considered too expensive or ineligible.

7. LEGAL COMMITMENTS

7.1. Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs)

Stage 1: Conclusion of an FPA

This call for proposals is launched with a view to identifying entities with which to conclude a Framework Partnership Agreement (hereafter "FPA") with the EASME.

In response to this call for proposals, applicants will submit a **two-year strategic plan**. In the event of successful evaluation, a framework partnership agreement detailing the conditions of cooperation will be sent to the applicant, as well as information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties. This FPA will cover a period of two (2) years and will lay down the general rules applicable to the long-term partnership between the parties. It will include in annex the framework partner's biannual strategic plan. As mentioned, an FPA does not constitute a legal commitment and does not entail entitlement to funding. An FPA is a bilateral act which formalises a long-term cooperation between EASME and the beneficiary of an FPA. Applicants should note that no grant will be awarded at this stage.

A model FPA is published together with the present call for proposals.

7.2. Specific Grant Agreements (SGAs)

Stage 2: Award of a specific operating grant

Applicants that will be awarded an FPA will be invited to submit their SGA proposals, which will contain their annual work programmes together with the related budget.

After a successful selection, and possibly following an adjustment phase, a grant agreement, drawn up in euro and detailing the conditions and level of funding, will be sent to the applicant, as well as the information on the procedure to formalise the agreement of the parties.

The same procedure will be followed for the framework partner's 2021 Work Programme (subject to the conclusion of a post-2020 LIFE Regulation containing appropriate provisions). In the course of 2020, all framework partners will receive an invitation to submit their 2021 proposal, which will be assessed and, if needed, adjusted as described above.

8. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Details on financial provisions are laid out in the application guide and the model Grant Agreements, published together with this call.

8.1. Form of the grant - reimbursement of costs actually incurred²⁴

➤ Maximum amount requested

The specific operating grant is limited to a maximum co-funding rate of 60% of the **total eligible costs**. Consequently, part of the total eligible expenses entered in the estimated budget must be financed from sources other than the EU grant (see Section 8.6).

Furthermore, the maximum amount that may be requested and awarded per year is EUR 700,000 (seven hundred thousand euros) per year.

The amount requested for the second year (financial year 2021) cannot exceed the amount requested for the first year (financial year 2020), therefore it is advised to request the same amount for the first and second years of the FPA.

For organisations that have been awarded an FPA under the Call 2017 (LIFE-NGO-FPA-EASME-2017), the maximum amount that may be requested and awarded for both years is limited to the same amount as the one requested for the financial years 2018 and 2019.

8.2. Eligible costs

Eligible costs shall meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred by the beneficiary;
- they are incurred during the duration of the work programme, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
 - the period of eligibility of costs will start as specified in the grant agreement;
 - costs eligible for financing may neither have been incurred before the grant application was submitted nor before the start of the beneficiary's financial year;
- they are indicated in the estimated budget of the work programme;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the work programme which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the work programme with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

²⁴ Articles 125 and 194(1)(c) FR

8.3. Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the work programme are those costs which **with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above**, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the work programme and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as :

- (a) *the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration.*

Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration. They may also comprise additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (i) *the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);*
 - (ii) *the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and*
 - (iii) *the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary;*
- (b) *costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;*
- (c) *the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, provided that the asset:*
 - (i) is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices; and*
 - (ii) has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement.*

The costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are exclusive of any finance fee;

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception, the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible

under the Special Conditions, if this is justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

- (d) Costs of rental directly linked with the implementation of the work programme, this includes rent of premises/offices and charges of equipment for the duration of the work programme and for offices, for the surface dedicated to the implementation of the work programme;*
- (e) Other costs include:*
 - * costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:*
 - (i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and*
 - (ii) are directly assigned to the action;*
 - * costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement.*
 - * structural and support costs of an administrative, technical and logistical nature and the running costs of the organization, such as communication costs (telephone, fax, internet & e-mail, postage), insurance, maintenance of office equipment, bank charges, etc...;*
- (f) costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met;*
- (g) duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the grant agreement.*

8.4. Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

NA

8.5. Ineligible costs

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

- a) return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary;
- b) debt and debt service charges;
- c) provisions for losses or debts;
- d) interest owed;
- e) doubtful debts;
- f) exchange losses;
- g) costs of transfers from the EASME charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- h) costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the Union budget. Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State

and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Commission or EASME for the purpose of implementing the Union budget.

- i) contributions in kind from third parties;
- j) excessive or reckless expenditure;
- k) deductible VAT.

8.6. Balanced budget²⁵

The estimated budget of the work programme must be attached to the application of the SGA. It must have revenue and expenditure in balance.

The budget must be drawn up in euros.

Applicants for whom costs will not be incurred in euros should use the exchange rate published on the Infor-euro website available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/inforeuro_en.cfm

The applicant must ensure that the resources which are necessary to carry out the work programme are not entirely provided by the EU grant.

Co-financing of the work programme may take the form of:

- the beneficiary's own resources,
- income generated by the action or work programme,
- financial contributions from third parties.

8.7. Calculation of the final grant amount

The final amount of the grant is calculated by the EASME at the time of the payment of the balance. The calculation involves the following steps:

Step 1 — Application of the reimbursement rate to the eligible costs

The amount under step 1 is obtained by applying the reimbursement rate specified in Section 8.1 to the eligible costs actually incurred and accepted by the EASME.

Step 2 — Limit to the maximum amount of the grant

The total amount paid to the beneficiaries by the EASME may in no circumstances exceed the maximum amount of the grant as indicated in the grant agreement. If the amount obtained following Step 1 is higher than this maximum amount, the final amount of the grant is limited to the latter.

Step 3 — Reduction due to the no-profit rule

Not applicable for non-profit organisations.

Step 4 — Reduction due to improper implementation or breach of other obligations

²⁵ Article 196(1)(e) FR

The EASME may reduce the maximum amount of the grant if the action has not been implemented properly (i.e. if it has not been implemented or has been implemented poorly, partially or late), or if another obligation under the Agreement has been breached.

The amount of the reduction will be proportionate to the degree to which the action has been implemented improperly or to the seriousness of the breach.

8.8. Reporting and payment arrangements²⁶

8.8.1 Payment arrangements

The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

Payment request ²⁷	Accompanying documents ²⁸
A pre-financing payment corresponding to 60 % of the maximum grant amount	financial guarantee, if applicable (see Section 5.4.1)
OR a pre-financing payment in two instalments: A pre-financing payment corresponding to 30 % of the maximum grant amount	n/a
A second pre-financing payment corresponding to 30% of the maximum grant amount.	(a) technical report on progress (b) statement on the use of the previous pre-financing instalment
Payment of the balance The EASME will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount (see Section 8.7 above). If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the EASME through a recovery order ²⁹ .	(a) final technical report (b) final financial statement (c) summary financial statement aggregating the financial statements already submitted previously and indicating the receipts (d) a certificate on the financial statements and underlying accounts, when applicable

In case of a weak financial capacity, section 5.4.1 above applies.

²⁶ Articles 115, 202 and 203 FR

²⁷ Article 115 FR

²⁸ Article 203(2) FR

²⁹ Article 115(2) FR

8.8.2 Pre-financing guarantee³⁰

A pre-financing guarantee for up to the same amount as the pre-financing may be requested in order to limit the financial risks linked to the pre-financing payment.

The financial guarantee, in euro, shall be provided by an approved bank or financial institution established in one of the EU Member States. Amounts blocked in bank accounts shall not be accepted as financial guarantees.

The guarantee may be replaced by a joint and several guarantee by a third party.

The guarantee shall be released as the pre-financing is gradually cleared against interim payments or the payment of the balance, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the grant agreement.

As an alternative to requesting a guarantee on pre-financing, the EASME may decide to split the payment of pre-financing into several instalments. See further details on that in the application guide.

8.9. Other financial conditions

a) Non-cumulative award³¹

Applicants may receive only one operating grant per financial year from the budget of the European Union.

Under no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the Union budget. To ensure this, applicants shall indicate in the grant application the sources and amounts of Union funding received or applied for the same action or part of the action or for its (the applicant's) functioning during the same financial year as well as any other funding received or applied for the same action.³²

b) Non-retroactivity³³

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

Costs eligible for financing may neither have been incurred before the grant application was submitted nor before the start of the beneficiary's budgetary year.

c) Implementation contracts/subcontracting³⁴

Where the implementation of the work programme requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest.

In the event of implementation contracts exceeding €60 000, the beneficiary must abide by following additional rules:

³⁰ Articles 152 and 153 FR

³¹ Article 191 FR

³² Article 196(1)(f) FR

³³ Article 193 FR

³⁴ Article 205 FR

- For procurement contracts with a value of more than EUR 60 000, the beneficiary will request three offers from three different companies;
- For procurement contracts with a value of more than EUR 135 000, the beneficiary will publish a call for tender in a legal publication or in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation in the event of an audit.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
- c) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
- d) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the EASME. The EASME may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
- e) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.

Attention: **these conditions also apply when contracting part of the work to members of the beneficiary NGO.**

d) Financial support to third parties³⁵

The applications may not envisage provision of financial support to third parties.

9. PUBLICITY

9.1 By the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the grant is used.

With a view to ensuring the visibility of the LIFE Programme, the beneficiaries shall publicise the LIFE Programme and the results of their projects, always mentioning the

³⁵ Article 204 FR

Union support received. The LIFE Programme logo, depicted in Annex II of the LIFE Regulation³⁶, shall be used for all communication activities and appear on notice boards at strategic places visible to the public. All durable goods acquired in the framework of the LIFE Programme shall bear the LIFE Programme logo except in cases specified by the EASME.

If this requirement is not fully complied with the beneficiary's grant may be reduced in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

9.2 By the EASME

With the exception of scholarships paid to natural persons and other direct support paid to natural persons in most need, all information relating to grants awarded in the course of a financial year shall be published on an internet site of the European Union institutions no later than the 30 June of the year following the financial year in which the grants were awarded.

The EASME will publish the following information:

- name of the beneficiary;
- address of the beneficiary;
- subject of the grant;
- amount awarded.

Upon a reasoned and duly substantiated request by the beneficiary, the publication shall be waived if such disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of individuals concerned as protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union or harm the commercial interests of the beneficiaries.

10. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

The reply to any call for proposals involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) N° 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested that are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for proposal will be processed solely for that purpose by the Head of Unit LIFE and CIP Eco-innovation of EASME. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available on the privacy statement at: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/sites/easme-site/files/privacy-statement-calls-easme.pdf>

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the EASME, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Articles 136 and 141 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046³⁷ For more information see the Privacy Statement on: https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en.

³⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1293&from=EN>

³⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018R1046>

11. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF FPA PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted in two sealed envelopes in accordance with the formal requirements and by the deadline set out under Section 3.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the EASME may contact the applicant during the evaluation process³⁸.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.³⁹

Application forms are available at:

<https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/calls-proposals>

Applications must be submitted in the correct form, duly completed, dated and signed by the person authorised to enter into legally binding commitments on behalf of the applicant organisation. They must be submitted in *two* copies (one original clearly identified as such, plus one copy), plus one electronic copy contained on a CD or USB stick.

Please include a formal letter accompanying the proposal requesting its evaluation, signed by a representative of your organization.

FPA Applications must be sent to EASME in one of the following ways:

1. Applications may be sent by ordinary or registered mail (postal service) or by express delivery service to the following address:

*European Commission
Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), Unit B.3, Secretariat,
COV2 8/074
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium*

Proof of delivery will be the date on the postmark, which must be not later than 3 June 2019.

2. Applications may be delivered by private courier or hand-delivered to the following address:

*European Commission
Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), Unit B.3, Secretariat,
COV2 8/074
Avenue du Bourget 1
B-1140 Brussels (Evere)
Belgium*

The Central Mail Service is open from 08.00 to 17.00 Monday to Thursday, and from 8.00 to

³⁸ Articles 151 and 200(3) FR

³⁹ Article 200 FR

16.00 on Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Commission holidays.

Proof of delivery by private courier will be the date and time received by the courier, which must be not later than 3 June 2019.

Proof of hand-delivery at the Central Mail Service (other than by a private courier) will be the date and time received according to the deposit slip, which must be not later than 3 June 2019, 16h00.

Applications sent by fax or e-mail will not be accepted.

Proposals must be placed inside two sealed envelopes. Both the outer and inner envelopes should be addressed as indicated above. In addition, the inner envelope, addressed as indicated above, should also be marked as follows:

Call for proposals for framework partnership agreements: **LIFE-NGO-EASME-2019**

"FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS TO SUPPORT NON-
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS"

"NOT TO BE OPENED BY THE INTERNAL MAIL DEPARTMENT "

Executive Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (EASME)
Unit B.3, Secretariat, COV2 8/074, Brussels

Please also send an email to EASME-LIFE-NGO@ec.europa.eu to inform EASME that you have submitted a proposal in order to facilitate our internal planning. Please do not enclose with the email your proposal or any element of your proposal.

If a proposal has been sent before the submission deadline but arrives only after the conclusion of the evaluation phase, the proposal will not be considered.

Applicants must keep any proof of the timely submission of their proposal.

The deadline and procedure for submitting SGA applications will be indicated in the invitation for SGA proposals, that will be sent only to the successful FPA applicants.

12. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

The information contained in the present call document together with the application guide and a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) provide all the information you require to submit an application. Please read it carefully, paying particular attention to the priorities and award criteria of the present call.

➤ **FAQ:** <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/calls-proposals>

In case of questions, please submit them at the latest by the 27th of May 2019 at 24.00 pm only to the functional mailbox:

➤ Contact – functional mailbox: EASME-LIFE-NGO@ec.europa.eu

After this date, EASME will endeavour to answer timely but cannot guarantee a response to your question.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, EASME will not give a prior opinion on a work programme, an action or specific activities.

All questions together with the answers and other important notices will be published in the FAQ at regular intervals on the Call website. EASME may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or clerical in the text of the call for proposals on the LIFE website. It is therefore advisable to consult this website regularly in order to be informed of any updates and of the questions and answers published.

No modification to the proposal is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. If there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, EASME may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process. This is generally done by e-mail. It is entirely the responsibility of applicants to ensure that all contact information provided is accurate and functioning. In case of any change of contact details, please send an email with the new contact details to the functional mailbox indicated above.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reasons for rejection. No information regarding the award procedure will be disclosed until the notification letters have been sent to the beneficiaries.

13. ANNEXES

- Application forms A, T & F
- Model FPA
- Model SGA